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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Soil Conservation Service
Upper Mississippi Region
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

February 17, 1944

*De classified
Glenn K. Paul SCS
Nov 30 1954*

To: State Conservationists

From: R. H. Musser, Regional Conservator

Subject: State Advisory Committees

You will recall that suggestions have been made to you from time to time regarding the functioning of the state advisory committees.

It was anticipated that the interested agencies of the Department in Washington might develop a series of suggestions to state advisory committees. It appears now that this has been delayed. Accordingly, the regional office has prepared a list of suggestions for the use and guidance of the state conservationists. This material has been discussed with you personally.

The copy attached to this memorandum is for your own use. It is suggested that this document be kept confidential but you are free to use the material it contains in any way you wish. In other words, it is not felt desirable to place this list of suggestions in the hands of the members of the state advisory committees.

R. H. Musser

Attachment



III-736

THE STATE SOIL CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The changes in operating procedures as a result of the decline in the number of camps and projects and the increase in the number of soil conservation districts, together with the changes resulting from the war, make it desirable to review the functions of the state soil conservation advisory committee in the light of present conditions and in somewhat more detail than in the past.

The origin of the state soil conservation advisory committee is reviewed and its functions are outlined briefly in "A Policy Statement on Relationships Between the Soil Conservation Service and the Extension Service" (3-29-40) as follows:

"When the Soil Conservation Service was first established in the Department of Agriculture, the Secretary of Agriculture appointed a Soil Conservation Advisory Committee in each State to assist the Soil Conservation Service in formulating a program for soil conservation work in the State; in coordinating the activities of various agencies concerned with soil conservation; in locating demonstration and other projects; in encouraging the formation by farmers of soil conservation associations and in otherwise contributing to a unified plan of action."

The state soil conservation advisory committee is responsible for developing and planning a soil conservation program for the state and in coordinating the efforts of the cooperating agencies in carrying out this program.

"Although the membership of this committee varies somewhat in different states, the State Director of Extension, the State Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the State Coordinator of the Soil Conservation Service [This position has been eliminated and the duties assumed by the State Conservationist] are among the members in every case. By virtue of their offices these men have available for assistance in developing the work of the committee the resources of their respective agencies. In turn, these resources may and should be utilized by the State Advisory Committees in the operations phases of the program. The basic duties and responsibilities of the State Advisory Committees have not changed as the result of the passage of the State Soil Conservation Districts laws." - (Policy Statement)

In order to avoid confusion, it seems desirable to outline also the functions of the state soil conservation committee:

THE STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The state soil conservation districts acts established a state soil conservation committee (board or commission). Most acts define the responsibilities of this committee as:

1. Make legal determination necessary in the organization of soil conservation districts.
2. Guide and coordinate the activities of organized soil conservation districts through advice and consultation.
3. Disseminate information to encourage the formation of soil conservation districts where their organization is desirable.
4. Allocate to soil conservation districts the appropriations made by the state legislature for this purpose.

The state soil conservation committee is responsible largely for the leadership in district formation and in coordination of soil conservation district activities within the state.

Preparation of State Soil Conservation Program

The preparation of the state soil conservation program is one of the primary responsibilities of the state soil conservation advisory committee. This program should:

- a. "Set forth the situation in the state"
 - b. "Determine methods for effecting the program, including research, education, and operations"
- (Policy Statement)

In a memorandum dated May 2, 1936, signed by D. S. Myer, an outline was suggested for the state soil conservation program consisting of five major subdivisions:

1. The problem - quantitative and qualitative information on the need for soil conservation.
2. Present work - what is being done.
3. General objectives - sets forth objectives and general scope of desirable action.
4. Plans for the ensuing year - setting forth procedures for ensuing year that lead toward the attainment of objectives.
5. Inventory - listing of personnel and facilities of all agencies available for use in the state.

In the development of the state program, the advisory committee should utilize a supporting committee to prepare specific phases of the program under the general policies laid down by the advisory committee.

Activities of the State Advisory Committee

Certain activities are suggested as appearing to be particularly pertinent at this time. They are suggestive only of some things that the state soil conservation advisory committee might well consider.

Soil Conservation Practices for Production

The urgent need for food production has focused attention on the application of certain conservation practices on the land as a means of increasing production and at the same time conserving the soil.

State advisory committees should give consideration to inventorying the available facilities within the state. In coordinating the efforts of all agencies in widespread conservation, responsibility should be established among various agency personnel available for each step, such as, educational work to interest farmers in practices, technical assistance in applying practices and follow-up to see that starting practices ultimately lead to a plan on the entire farm. In this connection a calendar of operations showing the "what", "when", "how", "where", and "who" may be desirable.

To get greater numbers of farmers to apply conservation measures on their land, attention should be given to an intensification of conservation educational efforts, the modification of present educational methods and materials, and the development of more effective techniques for the conduct of method demonstrations such as level schools, contour lay-out demonstrations, plow terrace construction, etc.

Development of Conservation Recommendations for the Agricultural Conservation Program

In the development of conservation recommendations for the agricultural conservation program, it has been suggested that the state soil conservation advisory committee, in cooperation with the state AAA administrative officer or chairman, establish a subcommittee to formulate the conservation recommendations (See memorandum from M. L. Wilson to Extension Directors, June 8, 1943, to which is attached J. L. Boatman's memorandum to M. L. Wilson of May 26, 1943). This suggestion is based on the assumption that the state soil conservation advisory committee has been functioning in the development of a unified plan of action on state soil conservation programs, and the state AAA administrative officer has worked with this committee particularly in respect to soil conservation problems in critical areas and on widespread adoption of conservation practices.

Soil Conservation Districts

The state soil conservation program, containing the analysis of the situation within the state, should provide the basis upon which the state advisory committee can recommend to the state soil conservation committee general plans for the organization of new districts. Such plans can only be tentative because the soil conservation district must arise through a recognition of the needs and desires of local people. It is the responsibility of the state advisory committee to set up recommendations for an educational program that will provide local people all the facts they need to intelligently decide their course of action in respect to the organization of a soil conservation district. However, if the responsibilities of the several cooperating agencies are to be fully carried out, (see "A Policy Statement on Relationships Between the Soil Conservation Service and the Extension Service", also basic memorandum of understanding with the State Extension Service), such an analysis will aid the distribution of the time of personnel and other facilities within the state, to more effectively meet pre-district organization needs. A thorough and complete understanding of the district movement on the part of all line and staff officials of the cooperating agencies is needed. The state advisory committee is in a position to see that opportunity is provided for all personnel to become acquainted with soil conservation districts and their methods of operation.

Action in Drainage

Renewed interest in drainage is evident as a result of the heavy spring rains (1943) and the importance of obtaining crop production on the more fertile and usually lower lying soils. The successful conduct of drainage activities will necessitate additional efforts in educational work in drainage and may require the use of educational techniques applicable to drainage enterprises. General policies may need to be considered governing the type and extent of the drainage assistance rendered.

Note: The transfer of drainage and irrigation activities of the Department to the Soil Conservation Service by the Secretary was effected October 8, 1938. The Act (Public 46) establishing the Soil Conservation Service is broad enough to include drainage and irrigation work. The annual appropriations acts also carry the following statement: For carrying out preventive measures to conserve soil and water.....and including the improvement of farm irrigation and land drainage.....

Technical Guides

In order to insure uniformity in conservation recommendations, technical guides or handbooks in certain subject matter fields have been prepared for

most states, in cooperation with interested departments and subject matter specialists in the land grant colleges and experiment stations. In all cases the technical guides have been reviewed by staff members of these institutions. The need for additional technical guides or handbooks and the revision of existing guides might well be considered by the advisory committee. Appropriate assignments could be made to carry out their cooperative preparation.

Improved Methods and Procedures

The soil conservation district - a local autonomous body - is a relatively new "tool" in agriculture. Methods and procedures will undoubtedly need to be modified in working with the soil conservation district. Specifically, some Soil Conservation Service personnel have developed and are continuing to develop changes and modifications in the methods used in farm conservation planning and of the application of conservation measures on the land. Likewise, some extension specialists have made modifications in the methods used in farm conservation planning and of the application of conservation measures on the land. Likewise, some extension specialists have made modifications in the "extension approach" in order to cooperate effectively with soil conservation districts. The soil conservation district offers opportunities for the experiment station to serve new sections of the state. The state advisory committee could well encourage a periodical analysis of current recommendations and procedures, review suggestions, and recommend improved techniques and procedures to keep abreast of current needs.

Needed Conservation Research

The soil conservation research needs should be outlined to provide the suggestions for adjustment of the present research programs in soil conservation within the state. The many and varied activities and contacts of personnel of the cooperative agencies should produce many valuable ideas and suggestions which, if brought to the attention of the state advisory committee, could greatly strengthen the program of soil conservation conducted by the state experiment station itself or in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture. Consideration might well be given to establishment of a "clearing-house" for collecting and formulating these ideas and suggestions.

Note: "That the advisory committee serve not only to bring together all state and federal information on soil conservation but also to point out specific problems requiring research" - Report of Secretary's Committee on Soil Conservation, June 5, 1935

Field Trials

Field trials are designed to facilitate more immediate application of research findings, to provide for agriculture a facility for performing the same technical function in crop and soil management and production that the "pilot plant" performs for industry. Consideration needs to be given to the type and extent of the field trials needed. To carry on an effective servicing of field trials will require adequate planning, assignment of responsibilities, the marshalling of the facilities available within the state. (See H. H. Bennett's memorandum to Regional Conservators, State Conservationists, and Research Supervisors of December 7, 1942).

Observational Studies

Observational studies deal with the improvement and utilization of grasses and legumes and woody plant materials for use in the soil conservation program. They consist of studies at the nurseries and in the field under farm conditions in soil conservation districts. The observational studies are conducted by the technicians of the Soil Conservation Service Nursery Division in cooperation with the state colleges.

The state soil conservation advisory committee should give general guidance and direction to these studies and aid in furnishing facilities needed.

Training

Obviously, the better trained the agricultural personnel are in soil conservation techniques and practices, the faster the progress will be toward achieving the objectives outlined in the state program. Many extension workers need to acquire a greater familiarity with soil conservation techniques and practices. Soil Conservation Service personnel need to become better acquainted with the methods used by the Extension Service in handling groups. Many administrative officials such as county agent leaders have not had the opportunity to become as familiar with soil conservation techniques as the subject matter specialists. These examples point out the need for training. The state soil conservation advisory committee can, with the resources available within the state, sponsor a training program that will meet the needs of all agencies concerned with soil conservation, and assist in providing the necessary instructions.

Soil Conservation Teaching

The importance of soil conservation as a permanent feature of the nation's agriculture indicates the desirability of including soil conservation in the subject matter taught by the land grant colleges and universities. Some educational institutions now offer courses in soil conservation while in others soil conservation has been injected into

existing courses. A preliminary survey indicates that more emphasis is needed. The state advisory committee might well consider and make recommendations to the college and university executives on improvements and additions to the agricultural curricula and the integration of soil conservation into the present subject matter courses. College graduates need now as, perhaps, never before, an understanding of and training in the techniques of soil conservation, since future personnel for the cooperating agencies will come largely from these institutions.

Extension Demonstration Farms

Extension demonstration farms have proved a vital force in conservation, focusing attention on the need for and results to be obtained from conservation farming. In some states, additional extension demonstration farms may be needed in certain sections not served by operating soil conservation districts or demonstration projects. Demonstration farms established in cooperation with the Farm Security Administration in several states have been quite effective in developing interest of rehabilitation and tenant purchase clients. The state soil conservation advisory committee should consider the need for and location of additional extension demonstration farms as an aid in reaching the objectives of the state program.

Demonstration Projects

In some states large areas exist in which no soil conservation activities are under way. Where this need cannot be met through the establishment of extension demonstration farms, consideration might be given to recommending the establishment of additional projects. Projects are limited to 25,000 acres under cooperative agreement unless a larger area is specifically approved. In this region, projects are further limited to 25 to 50 cooperators and to an operating period of two years. Such follow-up and checking as may be necessary are handled by specific assignment rather than by retaining personnel on the project. A list of proposed projects, based on the action of the state advisory committees, is on file in the regional office of the Soil Conservation Service for consideration as funds and facilities permit (Manual 41102). Periodically, the state advisory committee may wish to revise these recommendations.

Farm Forestry

The farm forestry activities within a state are based on a general farm forestry program developed by the State Farm Forestry Committee. (Manual 42210). (Policies and Procedures for Farm Forestry Program, January 8, 1940). The Director of Extension (as chairman of the State Land Use Planning Committee) and the state conservationist are members of this committee. Since one of the guiding farm forestry principles is the development of the farm woodland as a productive and integral unit of the farm, based on proper land use (Manual 42110, page 2), it becomes apparent that farm forestry activities should be considered in the state program. The state soil conservation advisory committee should review the situation within the state and make such recommendations as they may see fit to the Farm Forestry Committee.

Submarginal Land Acquisition Development and Management

Because of the war, land acquisition and development under Title III of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act has been sharply curtailed. However, consideration needs to be given to the tentative selection of areas qualifying under the terms of this act. The state soil conservation advisory committee should recommend areas for which proposals should be prepared for acquisition projects and review such proposals when they are completed.

Flood Control

Flood control, except for emergencies such as the 1943 spring floods in this region, is inactive and will likely continue so for the duration. At such time as flood control preliminary examinations, surveys, and run-off and waterflow recordation measures on the watersheds are again initiated, the state soil conservation advisory committee can make such arrangements as will facilitate the review of these reports to insure that state officials have the opportunity to inject the state point of view. (See Public 738 - 74th Congress, January 22, 1936).

Land Use and Post-War Planning

The state soil conservation advisory committee should review the recommendations of the Departmental Regional Post-War Planning Committees as they relate to soil conservation, and incorporate into the state soil conservation program recommendations for the post-war period. Other agencies such as state and county planning boards, zoning committees, and local groups have and will develop plans including soil conservation features. Such plans should be integrated with the state soil conservation program. Encouragement should be given to local agencies, such as soil conservation districts, to develop project proposals, providing for the utilization of such public works facilities as may be needed and available during the post-war period. General criteria should be established to serve as guides to local agencies in the analysis of local problems and development of specific work project proposals.

The members of the state advisory committee, being the administrators of the agencies they represent, are primarily concerned with the formulation of policies governing the administration and coordination of the work. The development of detailed plans or procedures should be delegated to a supporting or working committee.



